

**Talking Points
Signing of House Bill 1467
Tuesday, March 17, 2009
Jackson**

**Recognize the two legislative Tourism Committee
chairs:**

Sen. Lydia Chassaniol; Rep. Diane Peranich

Also attending: Craig Ray, Mary Beth Wilkerson, and Sandy Bynum from the MDA Tourism Division.

Bill Seratt of Vicksburg, president of the Mississippi Tourism Association; and Susan Speed, of Meridian, the association's executive director.

Other friends of Tourism: Bo Whittington, Beth Carrier (CAREAR), and Kim Thomas

- Good morning, and thank you all for being here today.
- One of the unchallenged assumptions in the American economy - even as troubled as it is right now - is that tourism pays.
- Here in Mississippi, tourism generates about 85,000 direct jobs, attracts about 20 million visitors a year, and represents a \$6 billion-dollar business.

- Those are significant numbers, and it's no wonder since Mississippi has such incredible natural beauty and a wide array of appealing in-door and out-door attractions.
- Today, with House Bill 1467, we open a new chapter in Mississippi tourism, one I believe will create new jobs and lead to more economic development.
- And, I credit Senator Chassaniol and Representative Peranich, chairs of the Tourism Committees in the Senate and House, with shepherding this bill through the legislative process.
- At its core HB 1467 offers a new Tourism Rebate Program designed to encourage developers to create attractions that draw more visitors to Mississippi.
- These developers must make a minimum \$10 million investment. In return, the state will rebate a portion of the sales taxes collected on the project to offset their costs for a maximum of 10 years.
- The program will encourage the construction of attractions like water parks and entertainment parks, hotels (with a minimum \$40 million investment) and public golf courses with a minimum investment of \$10

million. MDA will have to approve all projects to ensure they comply with this new law.

- I am especially pleased this bill allows Mississippi Tourism to take another big step in enhancing our appeal to visitors. As we know, once people step foot in Mississippi, they fall in love with its beauty and the hospitality of its people.
- That said, it's my pleasure to sign the bill.